

"Hints on breastfeeding and H1N1"

Here is some advice for you nursing moms from the breastfeeding center of greater washington.....

In addition, the staff at The Breastfeeding Center for Greater Washington recommends:

- Keep your baby in a sling or carrier in public settings, to reduce contact with strangers. That proximity means the mother and baby share any exposures, which reflect in the live and specific antibodies produced in the mother's milk
- Remind others that babies are vulnerable, and to stay away if they might be getting sick
- Provide a place to wash up or hand sanitizer to any visitors
- Assure adequate Vitamin D levels thru supplements. Vitamin D is essential to the immune system
- If possible, do not wean during this flu season, even if you are just nursing once a day or expressing milk. Even small amounts of breast milk can be useful in fending off disease.

If my baby is sick, should we still breastfeed?

Yes. Breastfeeding is one of the best things you can do for your sick little one. Give your baby many chances to feed throughout the day, to provide the extra fluids and comforting we all need when sick. Breast milk is a better source of fluids than water, juice, or Pedialyte because of its nutritional value and active immune factors.

If I am sick, should I still breastfeed?

Yes. The CDC's seasonal flu recommendations advocate that the ill mother continue breastfeeding. The CDC current H1N1-specific guidelines <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/infantfeeding.htm> , advocate that if a mother contracts H1N1, someone else who is not sick should care for the baby and provide the mother's pumped milk. The CDC guidelines advocating separation and pumping are controversial. Flu victims are contagious for at least a day before showing symptoms, so a breastfed baby is likely already exposed to a mother's illness, and therefore also to the antibodies to prevent or recover from illness. In addition, without testing, it can be hard to distinguish whether the mother is suffering from H1N1 or seasonal flu, so breastfeeding could potentially be disrupted for any illness.

The Breastfeeding Center for Greater Washington advocates for continued breastfeeding during illness if possible. Other healthcare organizations such as the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM)

<http://www.bfmed.org/Media/Files/Documents/H1N1%20and%20Breastfeeding%20-%20for%20physicians1.pdf>, and the American Academy of Pediatrics <http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/aapnews.20091012-1v1> encourage breastfeeding mothers to continue feeding babies directly at the breast, while maintaining careful general sanitary precautions.

The Breastfeeding Center for Greater Washington recommends the following if you think you have or are diagnosed with H1N1:

- Breastfeed while continuing to rest
- Universal precautions: frequent hand washing, avoid coughing or sneezing near your baby's face.
- Consider wearing a facemask or wearing gloves while interacting with your baby
- Drink lots of fluids
- Get help for any additional baby care or personal care
- Seek advice from your health care provider if needed
- Consider offering breast milk for any sick children/person in the home

What medications are safe for breastfeeding during the flu?

Antiviral medications such as Tamiflu are considered compatible with breastfeeding

Acetaminophen for fever and Ibuprofen for muscle pains are frequently used by nursing mothers and appear safe in most situations. Many find homeopathic aids like oscillococcinum and zinc helpful and are safe for breastfeeding mothers.

Aspirin-containing medications should be avoided due to the theoretic concern for Reye's syndrome. Avoid the decongestant pseudoephedrine as it may have an adverse effect on milk supply when used regularly. Reliable sources of information for safety of medications during breastfeeding include the database LACTMED on the NIH TOXNET website at <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACT>

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